

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, 24 February 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Mary Streeter, Chair, in the Town Room of Town Hall.

Committee members in attendance: Mary Streeter, Ellen Kosmer, Jim Brissette, Jim Oldham, Paris Boice, Laura Lovett

Committee members absent: Peter Jessop, Marilyn Blaustein

Staff and others in attendance: Sonia Aldrich, Dave Ziomek, Linda Chalfant, Jim Wald, Janet Keller, Rob Crowner, Maurianne Adams, Andrew Donoghue, Jonathan Kane, Sarah Matthews, Sally Neely, Angela Mills, E. J Mills, Vince O'Connor, Kafele Marcelin.

AGENDA ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED:

- Public Hearing on FY 16 Proposals
- Review financial Information
- Review & discuss proposals
- Updates from past recipients of CPA funds
- Approve any minutes
- Topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours before the meeting

PUBLIC HEARING began at 7:08

The Chair invited public comments on each of the funding requests.

Housing:

Amherst Affordable Housing Trust Fund—No public comments

Amherst Community Land Trust (ACLT)

Janet Keller, speaking on behalf of ACLT, responded to questions received previously from the CPA committee.

- 1) “Can we raise more money? Yes, and we have.” She presented a letter from Jan Dizard committing \$20K from Interfaith Housing, Inc, noting that this represents just one more collaboration of the many that are making this project happen.
- 2) Since we are collaborating with others, how are those partnerships formalized? ACLT is working with Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity, an MOU is well advanced and being reviewed by both boards, and will be ready by the time CPA committee is scheduled to vote on proposals.
- 3) A MOU is being drafted with North Amherst Community Farm as well.

Historic Preservation:

Cook Fountain—No public comments

Amherst Historical Society (two proposals) —No public comments for either

Jewish Community of Amherst (JCA)—Request has been withdrawn

Goodwin Memorial AME Zion Church—No public comments

Open space

Surveys and Appraisals—No public comments

Hall Property Acquisition—No public comments

Sally Neely, submitted and read letter from Julian Burgoff, sophomore ARHS (attached).

Hoerle Property APR—No public comments

Recreation

North Amherst Field

Linda Chalfont, director of LSSE, reported that those running programs at the former North Amherst School were pleased to hear that there may be additional parking, due to lack of staff parking at that location. Parking is also needed to facilitate access for all users.

Amherst Baseball: Mill River Field Improvements

Jonathan Kane, spoke on behalf of the board of Amherst Baseball, noting that Nate Budington (President) couldn't be present for family reasons. "The organization has provided answers to financial questions and wants to encourage the committee to fully fund the request. We have a large board that is looking forward to carrying all these things forward, with lots of energy, and we want to reconstruct and make these fields special. There are between 100 to 150 kids in Amherst Baseball, but it's a park the whole town uses."

Angela Mills. Board member: This is reconstruction, not simply a repair or maintenance need, and it's a safety issue

EJ Mills board member and coach: The existing batting cage is dangerous, with metal bars that balls bounce off of. Cages are vital for training kids. You've seen pictures of actual infield. It needs proper soil to be able to maintain and get fields to where they need to be in terms of safety.

Andy Donoghue, board member: We have lots of energy from parents and new life in program. We are reaching out to new kids, and have a plan for incentives and support for families that can't afford equipment. We need to be able to offer appropriate field. There's a high price tag but this is what is needed. This is where the smallest children play, so safety especially important

Mary Streeter thanked all presenters for their comments and let them know that the Committee vote is expected to be on March 3.

Mary Streeter observed that with the town vote increasing the CPA surcharge, there are ample funds and the Committee will need to discuss at next meeting whether to go to two cycles per year.

Maurianne Adams commented that it would be helpful to have two cycles per year, that it would make work of organizations like ACLT and others easier.

Mary Streeter noted that having two cycles requires developing two appropriate timelines. Paris Boice pointed out that there are important considerations in terms of timing of grant applications. Dave Ziomek concurred: two cycles would facilitate applying for and accessing state land grants and others.

It was reported that CPA Coalition wants to feature the Amherst Rolling Green project in their March newsletter.

PUBLIC HEARING ADJOURNED AT 7:45

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Sonia Aldrich presented updated report on the financial status of CPA funds. Changes include:

- Amherst Housing Authority \$50K not used for supplements to vouchers has been added back (see hand written notes on financials)
- ACLT request has been reduced by \$20K to \$95K per

Dave Ziomek provided an update on the Hoerle APR request. It's not yet ready to put on the warrant for Town Meeting. Project fits CPA criteria but negotiations are still going on. Committee members encouraged him to leave it on the list for the moment and continue to try to bring to completion, with the understanding that if not ready the project may get pulled from the warrant and perhaps come back in the fall.

Mary Streeter asked if Historical Commission has met to recommend funding priorities. Laura Lovett reported that the Commission has had difficulty in getting quorum. Dave Ziomek observed that the overall request in the area of historic preservation is just \$100K.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INPUT

Members of the public who did not arrive before the public hearing was adjourned were invited to speak at this point.

Vince O'Connor commented on several funding requests:

- He is happy to see Hall property on list for funding, because this delivers on a promise to Amherst Fields residents and represents the final piece of Wentworth Farm protection.
- His main concern regards the spending on recreational fields. Leisure services are very expensive for most families unless you meet very strict free and reduced lunch qualification. The programs that take place on these fields need to be accessible. Something has to be done to bring down costs for working class families who don't meet the low-income qualifications. In response, Jim Brissette agrees, and suggests that LSSE and School Committee (where costs to participate in sports are near top for the state) are where these issues need to be addressed. Vince insists that the town mustn't spend money on facilities that only are available to some members of our population due to financial barriers to participation. This is discriminatory.
- He also commented that he hates to see affordable housing money disappearing into nonprofits where there is a lack of transparency. There should be some public process and discussion in advance of decisions on how the funds are used; public support for affordable housing could be lost if we don't put strings on public money. Committee members noted that there are two housing requests, one from the newly created Amherst Affordable Housing Trust Fund which is a public body, not a private nonprofit, and the Amherst Community Land Trust, which is a private nonprofit but whose request is for a specific and well-defined land acquisition that will incorporate use restrictions to be held by the town.

Kafele Marcelin, a new resident in town, spoke to the committee about the problems faced by people who lack housing or jobs in town. He feels the town economy benefits from students and young people yet fails to provide for their needs.

Mary Streeter explained the role of CPA committee and suggested other committees and town staff that might be more able to address the issues raised.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSALS

Hall Property: Mary Streeter asked if making this a conservation area increases the protection of Gull Pond waters. Paris Boice commented that the wetland protection law is already applicable. Dave Ziomek noted that the purchase will prevent the construction of any estate lots, which could likely be built if the property remains in private ownership.

Amherst Affordable Housing Trust Fund: Mary Streeter suggested that the request on behalf of the Trust Fund is premature given that the Trust Fund has not yet begun any activity. Ellen Kosmer said the committee has been appointed, but Jim Oldham observed that it has not yet convened. Paris suggests more info would be helpful.

Cook Fountain: Jim Oldham expressed concerns about the high cost of proposed study. Dave Ziomek pointed to the public love of Sweetser Park. The fountain's foundation is slumped, casing is cracked, bowl deteriorating. It is made of marble which is subject to decay. This is a specialized job and for that you have to expect to pay a premium. Paris Boice supported the notion that there is strong public love for fountain and park.

Amherst Historical Society archeological study: Laura Lovett reported that the Historical Commission was impressed that the proposal is not just for a study but also an educational project. Vince O'Connor suggested that if the project is funded, the landscape needs a historic restriction. He also suggested that CPA Committee should ask the Society to raise some matching funds.

Strong House painting: Dave Ziomek reported that the legal opinion as to whether this is an allowable use of CPA funds is in draft form. He will talk to the lawyer tomorrow. Other outstanding questions regarding allowable use of CPA funds include the fencing and parking proposed under the request for North Amherst Field

Amherst Baseball request for Mill River fields—Jim Oldham raised concerns about the cost of the proposed dugouts. Amherst Baseball representatives explained that the dugouts provide protection from sun and from balls and noted that all the assets will remain property of the town even though funding conduit is Amherst Baseball.

Discussion of minutes postponed until next meeting

Jim Brissette made a motion to adjourn at 9:15pm Jim Oldham seconded. Voted 6-0

FUTURE MEETINGS:

March 3rd, 2015

March 31st, 2015

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

- Agenda, 1 page
- FY2016 CPA Proposals at a Glance 2-23-2015, 1 page
- Financial Status for CPA Funds, 2/24/15, 2 pages
- Letter from Amherst Baseball, Inc. Board of Directors, 2/24/15, 1 page
- Cost Estimate from Eric Johnson, UMass Archaeological Services, 1/21/15, 2 pages
- CPA Coalition 2014 Year in Review, 2 pages
- Letter to ACLT awarding \$20,000 grant – Dizard, 1 page
- Letter in Support Hall Property Proposal - Burgoff - , 2/24/15 1 page
- Proposal 5 North Amherst Field Answers to CPAC Questions

Respectfully submitted by Jim Oldham

Approved May 26, 2015